

Forest Conservation Advisory Committee

Minutes

March 23, 2010

Prepared by: Ken Ferebee

ATTENDEES

Members

Paul Allen (WSSC), ex officio
Ginny Barnes
Rick Brush, (DPS) ex officio
Mark Buscaino
Andrew Der
Ken Ferebee
Don Galloway
Dan Landry
Brett Linkletter (DPWT), ex officio
Caren Madsen
Laura Miller (DEP), ex officio
Mark Pfefferle (M-NCPPC), ex officio
David Plummer (MSCD), ex officio
David Post

Jeff Schwartz
Linda Silversmith
Kevin Smith
Bryan Straathof
Clark Wagner

Absent members

Norman Mease
Bill Pastor

Others attending

Stan Edwards, DEP Staff
Joe Beach, MC OMB
Katherine Nelson, M-NCPPC

MINUTES

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm.

Mr. Joe Beach presented the committee with a briefing on the County Executive's proposed FY11 Montgomery County budget. The projected gap in the FY11 is 778.9 million dollars which is forcing the reduction in many county programs to close this gap. Environmental programs in the county fared better than some programs only showing a projected -1.3% reduction in their operating budget from FY10 to FY11.

It was requested that a copy of this presentation be made available to the committee.

Ms. Katherine Nelson, Montgomery Planning Environmental Planning Division, presented an update on the M-NCPPC annual report for the Forest Conservation Program. She presented some graphs that showed that forests in the county retained on site are greater than the forests cleared over the last 15 years. A forest layer for the county has been completed for 1951 and for 2008. Some observations from comparing 1951 to 2008 are that there is now more forest in the agriculture reserve of the county than in the lower county. This is the opposite of what was found in 1951. Today, there is more emphasis on protecting and replanting stream valleys. In 1951 there were far more upland forests. All paper files have been digitized and the data base for M-NCPPC has been consolidated. A brief description of easements followed with a

demonstration of the easement link on the Montgomery Planning: Forest Conservation Program of Montgomery County web site.

Housekeeping Items followed the two presentations. Approval of the February, 2010 minutes was tabled until the next meeting since many committee members had not gotten a chance to review them.

A short discussion of using teleconferencing to attend committee meetings followed. Members could use on occasion but it was expected that members attend meetings in person.

Some concern was voiced about guests of the committee participating in committee discussions and in effect becoming “ad hoc” members. There seems to be no clear cut policy on this but some research may be needed and contact with BCC staff is needed for clarification. The idea was brought that maybe there should be a time set aside in the agenda for guests to ask questions or comment.

The committee representative from the Department of Transportation gave the committee members a brief description of the consequences of the proposed FY11 budget reductions on the county street tree program. Overall, the proposed budget reduction is approximately 65% of recent budgets which will reduce tree planting from approximately 1600-1800 per year to about 500 and reduce trees removed from approximately 1900 to 950. The projected budget will only allow for emergency work to be accomplished instead of preventive maintenance that is done now. Committee members are going to draft a letter to the County Executive to express concern over this budget projection.

A motion was brought forward from a committee member to close the discussion on the Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) proposal for revising the county’s Forest Conservation Law that the committee had been discussing since December, 2009. The motion was seconded.

Another committee member offered a second motion to amend the previous motion. The motion was to delete the part about closing the discussion on the DEP proposal in the previous motion.

There followed some discussion of what to do next. The original intent was to review and discuss the DEP proposal and for the committee to provide some feedback to DEP about the proposal. The committee chairman had prepared a short summary of previous discussions and comments and wanted to circulate it in the committee for approval. This would eventually be given to DEP as feedback.

After a short delay, the second motion was seconded.

At this time a motion was brought forward to table both motions before the committee until the next meeting.

The chair's summary of the DEP proposal was distributed to committee members for review and comment.

Meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm.

Next meeting on April 27, 2010, from 7:00-9:00pm in the DEP conference room.